

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

A final Office Action was mailed June 5, 2007. Applicants timely file this Preliminary Amendment together with a Request for Continued Examination.

Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

I. Status of the Claims

Claims 1, 6, 7, 9 - 12, 20, 23, 24 and 26 are presently pending, with claims 2 - 5, 8 13 - 19, 21, 22 and 25 having previously been canceled.

Claim 7 is canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter therein.

Claims 1, 11, 12, 23 and 24 are amended and new claim 27 is added without the introduction of new matter. Support for the amendments may be found, for example, with reference to Applicants' specification at page 14, lines 5 to 20, page 15, lines 17 to 24, page 24, lines 8 and 9, and page 25, lines 18 to 20.

Claims 1, 6, 9 - 12, 20, 23, 24, 26 and 27 remain pending with the entry of this Amendment.

II. Objections to the Claims

Claims 12 and 24 are objected to with regard to informalities. Applicants amend claims 12 and 24 to address the informalities, and respectfully request that the objection be withdrawn.

III. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 6, 7, 9, 12, 20, 23, 24 and 26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 3,665,923 to Champaigne, Jr. ("Champaigne"). Claims 10 and 11

are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Champaign in view of International Application Publication No. WO 99/26573, to Osborn, III (“Osborn”). As claim 7 is canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, the rejection of claim 7 is moot Applicants amend claims 1, 11, 12, 23 and 24 to further define the nature of their invention, and respectfully traverse the rejection of claims 1, 6, 9 - 12, 20, 23, 24 and 26 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a).

In amended independent claim 1, Applicants claim:

1. An interlabial pad comprising:

a first sheet forming a surface side sheet configured contacting a body, the first sheet having a permeable property for liquid;

a second sheet independent from the first sheet and forming a back face side sheet configured to be positioned away from the body, the second sheet including a plurality of sheet pieces, each partially overlapping another sheet piece over a range of 5 to 15 mm;

an absorbent body for absorbing liquid, the absorbent body being disposed between the surface side sheet and the back face side sheet;

a junction joining the surface side sheet and the back face side sheet at a peripheral edge of the absorbent body;

at least one seam part of the second sheet formed by overlapping the plurality of sheet pieces over one another, the seam part including:

a longitudinal seam part extending in a longitudinal direction of the interlabial pad, crossing over the second sheet from an edge to another edge of the second sheet, and

an adhesive agent applied between the sheet pieces at the longitudinal seam part along a longitudinal central line along the longitudinal direction,

wherein the sheet piece, which overlaps the other sheet piece at the longitudinal seam part and which covers a side closer to the longitudinal central line of the interlabial pad, is positioned at the absorbent body side of the second sheet, and wherein the sheet pieces are each formed of either a water disintegrable material or a biodegradable material to enable separation of the second sheet into the sheet pieces when discarded by flushing.

(Emphasis added)

Applicants amend independent claim 1 to further specify that a second sheet independent from the first sheet includes a plurality of sheet pieces, each partially overlapping another sheet piece over a range of 5 to 15 mm. Applicants respectfully submit that Champaigne fails to disclose or otherwise suggest this element of amended independent claim 1.

Osborn discloses an individual packaged for assisting in the hygienic insertion of an interlabial pad (see, e.g., abstract of Osborn). Applicants respectfully submit that Osborn also fails to disclose or suggest the above-described elements of Applicants' amended independent claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the above-described elements of Applicants' amended independent claim 1 are neither disclosed nor suggested by the sanitary napkin of Champaigne, with or without the addition of Osborn, and that amended independent claim 1

III. New Claim

Applicants further submit that new claim 27 is allowable for an additional reason.

With reference to formed claim 1, the Examiner argues that Applicants' argument as to the mini-sheet not being adhered to a peripheral edge of the absorbent body is not persuasive "because element (14) joins element (20) at and between the side edges of the article." Applicants remind the Examiner that it is protective strip 19 that is compared to the claimed mini-sheet, and submit that protective strip 19 is adhered nowhere near the periphery of the absorbent body 12 as required by

Applicants' claim 27 (see, e.g., FIG. 1 of Champaigne). The Examiner also argues that a pocket is formed between the protective strip 19 and wrapper/film 14/20. With further reference to FIG. 1 of Champaigne, Applicants however submit that the gap formed between protective strip 19 and wrapper/film 14/20 does not form a space that is sufficiently enclosed to be considered to form a pocket, and even assuming *arguendo* that it did, would not define a pocket suitable for receiving a finger for inserting and removing the napkin by a user. Applicants therefore respectfully submit that new claim 27 is also allowable for these additional reasons.

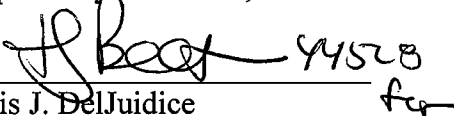
CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments, Applicants believe the pending application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below once he has reviewed the proposed amendment if the Examiner believes any issue can be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment.

Dated: September 4, 2007

Respectfully submitted,

By 
Louis J. DelJuidice
Registration No.: 47,522
DARBY & DARBY P.C.
P.O. Box 5257
New York, New York 10150-5257
(212) 527-7700
(212) 527-7701 (Fax)
Attorneys/Agents For Applicant